DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 251 957 EA 017 366

AUTHOR Walsh, Kevin; Cowles, Milly
TITLE Social Consciousness and Discipline.
PUB DATE Apr 84
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Catholic Educational Association (Boston, MA, April 16-20, 1984).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Discipline; Elementary Education; *Moral Development; Sanctions; Self Control; *Social Cognition; *Social Development; *Socialization; Social Responsibility; *Student Behavior

ABSTRACT

The act of disciplining children cannot be based upon merely "putting a stop" to negative actions by means of reactionary techniques of control. If educators begin to consider discipline as a major aspect of the educational aim of socialization of children, significant contributions toward their moral and social development will take place. Socialization must be a major element in a total education for students. Discipline within this social education must be preventative as well as corrective and based on the Trinity of Discipline--structure, intervention, and consistency. It must guide children in the development of a social consciousness and not merely be seen as a means of repentant melancholy. Discipline must be a process constructed and enacted in harmony with moral educational theory, whereby children experience social consequences consistent with the next-higher moral stage in their development. Discipline as an aspect of the social life of the school must contribute to the cognitive moral development of children and not merely restrict or shape them, for social consciousness is a product conceived in thought and interaction rather than blind obedience. (Author/DCS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Kevin Walsh;
Milly Cowles
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED251957

Social Consciousness and Discipline

Kevin Walsh and Milly Cowles

The Belief that the process of education must include the social and moral development of the child is deeply imbedded in American educational thought. Much earlier, the moral lessons taught in the McGuffey readers and now later the moral and values studies and programs appearing in the literature and operating in the schools signify the continuing importance of morals and values to citizens and educators. When as long ago as 1899 John Dewey stressed the urgent need for the practice of education to be concerned with the changing values of an emerging urban, technical society, a new note was sounded for moral education that is still to be realized in practice. For the most part; the years since Dewey's Chicago era have witnessed the dominance of an either/or philosophy of extremes. For example, in the last decade the educational pendulum was swinging from a diciplined right to an open left and back to a basic competency right. That is to say, during the latter half of the 1960s, there was an outcry by many people concerning the lack of democratic, and in some instances the employment of many dehumanizing, practices in schools. Authors such as Kozol (1967), Kohl (1967), and Silberman (1970) flooded the general reading public, as well as the educators, with books and articles condemning public education. Humanism, values, and student rights became the foci for an "open education," which was to prepare students to live in and contribute to a democratic society.

Now, however, control and order are in vogue. As the academic and social results of the open movement (which in most instances was

EA 017 366

NCEA Conference
1984

completely misunderstood and incorrectly practiced) come to light, other extremists are demanding a return to "discipline" and to the values of a basic, time-proven, traditional education (Brodinsky, 1977). The American educational scene has become replete with publications on "back-to-basics" and the lack of discipline within our schools (Phi Delta Kappan, 1977). Vandalism, disrespect, and assault in urban schools are the nuclei around which doomsday prognostications about the disintegration of the American way of life revolve.

The results of this reactionary pendulum movement have been detrimental to the evolution of educational practices regarding moral development in students. Since the work of Dewey, very little advancement has been made in moral educational techniques. The moral theory that has gained the most recent interest and support in education is that of Lawrence Kohlberg and is based on cognitive-developmental psychology. However, Kohlberg (1975) himself said "the cognitive-developmental approach was fully stated for the first time by John Dewey" and that Dewey himself postulated three levels of moral development: (1) the pre-moral or preconventional level "or behavior motivated by biological and social impulses with results for morals;" (2) the conventional level of behavior "in which the individual accepts with little critical reflection the standards of his group;" and (3) the autonomous level of behavior in which "conduct is guided by the individual thinking and judging for himself whether a purpose is good, and does not accept the standard of his group without reflection" (p. 670). Furthermore, the three levels described by Dewey do in fact correspond to the three major levels of moral development described by Kohlberg (1975).

In brief, Kohlberg believed that moral development proceeds through three sequential levels of reasoning that are dependent upon the cognitive development of the individual involved. Kohlberg has said that until a person reaches the formal Operations Stage as defined by Piaget as the highest level of cognitive development, which children reach around an average of eleven or twelve years of age, they are unable to operate other than in the lower levels of moral reasoning: The punishment and obedience orientation and/or an instrumental-relativist orientation (Kohlberg, 1975) thus he indirectly implies that the elementary school years are relatively unimportant in the moral development of the child, for since children are cognitively not capable of anything but the lowest level of moral reasoning, their moral development must wait for operational thought to emerge. That is a potentially dangerous assumption for one to make, for we believe that between birth and twelve years of age the child is developing the foundation from which later moral decisions will be heavily influenced. Therefore, rather than being a relatively unimportant time period in the moral development of the child; it is our contention that the elementary school years are vitally influential and important.

Following Henry Murray's work (1954) Abraham Maslow suggested that human beings have a hierarchy of needs that begins with physiological ones that build to psychological ones and then continues to more sophisticated and socially oriented ones. Maslow believed that an individual's more basic needs had to be minimally satisfied before he could be motivated to higher needs. According to Maslow's hierarchy, safety is second only to biological needs. Furthermore, safety even preceeds the drive for love and belonging to a group. Safety for the

child is found (1) in his realization that limits exist for him, (2) by his realizing that there are properly constituted authorities in his environments, and (3) by discovering that there is a consistency within the existence of the limits and from the properly constituted authorities. Since, however, the child's need for safety must be continually satisfied he is naturally driven to try the limits and the properly constituted authority over and over again. Those limits which are consistently enforced and the models that the properly constituted authorities exhibit are assimilated by the child and form the initial structure of conscience. Those limits which appear to be temporary and/or appropriate only to some situations or people are not assimilated into the structure and merely become relevant to the child in a hedonistic (or according to Kohlberg, preconventional) manner.

By means of this process, the people in the environment are preparing the child to think conventionally, that is toward law and order and respect for authority, prior to his movement to the highest cognitive level. This process is one by which the child develops the foundations of conscience-references from which to begin to construct moral attitudes and beliefs and prepares the child for a higher level of moral reasoning and actions. Furthermore, it is this foundational structure that assists the individual, by providing him with a consistent reference of attitudes and beliefs, in his search for identity (Erickson 1950) during his teenage years.

THE SCHOOL AS A CONTEXT FOR MORAL DEVELOPMENT

"Social Consciousness" is a moral developmental discipline program that emphasizes the vital importance of the social environment the child

experiences during his formative years (Walsh and Cowles, 1984). For as Dewey stressed: "Education itself is precisely the work of supplying the conditions which will enable the psychical functions as they successively arise to mature and pass into higher functions in the freest and fullest manner" (Archamboult, 1964, p. 207).

The approach that we advocate is based upon the belief that even if, as Kolhberg (1975) theorizes, "advanced moral reasoning depends upon advanced logical reasoning" and that "a person whose logical stage is only concrete operational is limited to the preconventional moral stage" (p. 670), the elementary school should provide numerous activities in social decision-making and its consequences, much the same as the concrete operational child is offered activities that lend themselves to the development of the formal operational level cognitively. For as Piaget (1948) stresses in his research, autonomous morality is developed and achieved by the mutual respect children have for their peers and by means of their interaction and resultant cognitive growth. Kohlberg (1971, P. 194) states "just as logic represents an ideal equilibrium of thought operations, justice represents an ideal equilibrium of social interaction with reciprocity or reversibility being core conditions for both logical and moral equilibrium." However, although Kohlberg and Piaget both stress the independence of moral growth from adult instruction, there is strong evidence to support modeling behavior's influence (Bandura and McDonald, 1963) in the socialization process. Furthermore, another major force in moral development that must be taken into consideration is the interaction of the child with the social structure of the environment.

The child's contextural experience - socially and morally during

his early childhood and middle years - provides the reference through which later moral decisions are influenced. Therefore, the child, being socially and morally egocentric during these years, needs an environment that is structured on social interaction and responsibility; thus the foundation is laid for later, higher levels of moral development.

If, as is theorized by Kohlberg (1971), the child in the preconventional level has an instrumental relativist orientation, and the next higher invariant sequential moral level is interpersonal concordance, then the school environment should be based upon social aspects which will allow children to experience this next higher level of moral development. Briefly, elementary school life should neither be grounded in preconventional standards, because that is the cognitive level that the children are on, nor strive for a postconventional level of idealism, which is totally out of sequence and reach of children. Rather, it should be educationally formulated to provide activities that promote children's reaching the next higher invariant sequential level in their moral development.

Theoretically, this discipline process (which is only one aspect of an elementary school life structured on social moral developmental theory) is to a great extent in harmony with cognitive developmental theory, as well as cognitive-moral developmental theory. Practically, it attempts to provide teachers with an alternative approach to discipline which is educational rather than punitive in nature. In this manner, the teacher can assume the role of a "social educator" instead of a "law enforcer," as is too often the expectation of today's classroom teachers.

THE TEACHER AND SOCIAL DISCIPLINE

The first step a teacher must take toward the use of social discipline is not any special capacity for it, but rather her desire to participate in it. Corporal punishment must be seen as serving the teacher and the school far better than it promotes the education of the child; the use of such force is usually initiated not in "the name of education," but rather in "the name of control." The teacher must realize that punitive action seems to be quite successful especially for those who have the capacity for physical dominance over the child involved - but that's because this type action is individual and is based upon a hierarchical power structure rather than a social relationship, the result is usually "fear," which is often confused with respect, and "situational," which is erroneously interpreted as being development toward self-discipline.

The pedagogical process for this kind of approach calls for the development of a social consciousness within the child, by means of social interaction and social discipline. This interactive, socially consequential process is necessary for an education in which the major concern is the development of a total human being who is capable of existing within and contributing to a democratic society.

Since with this approach, the child must be free to move rather than feign paralysis, he, in essence, lives not school structure but life itself, for his efforts are intrinsically social. The discipline by which he develops also must contribute to this end. The educator must believe that the individual is only to be considered truly disciplined when he can regulate his own actions and that it does little good to suffocate any activity within an individual when the consequence

is no more than immediate control. Can we ever consider ourselves to be educators when we force our children to do their work? They must assume the responsibility and be proud of doing so.

Socialization must be borne on the plane of increasing responsibility and effort on the part of the child. Freedom and activity are not only processes in a total education but also are vitally necessary for children's wholesome growth. However, educational activity is not uncontrolled movement and chaos on the part of the child but is rather activity that is thoughtfully planned by the child with the teacher and carried through to completion by the learner. The plan must include drawing out natural impulses, must respect the child's curiosity, and innovatively draw upon the child's creative abilities; however, this does not mean the withdrawal of social responsibilities to move egocentric concerns the child may have. Rather, the teacher maximizes opportunities for working with the child to gain the values of hard work, perserverance, self-criticism, and responsibility.

If the child is to benefit educationally from any disciplinary action taken, he must perceive his actions in a context with their realistic social relationships and consequences, as opposed to their contrived physical consequences. For example, Tommy, a six-year-old child, hits a companion for taking "his" chair. If the teacher proceeds to slap Tommy's hand or to assassinate his posterior with hand or board, Tommy is controlled (for the moment), but a more important dimension is the consequence of this action. In most such instances, the child realizes the action is wrong but only when the enforcer (the spanking) is present. There also is the tendency for the child to acquire the belief that the act itself is the cause for the teacher's displeasure

rather than his lack of showing social responsibility through his actions. Furthermore, using model of aggression provides a powerful influence upon later development. If, on the other hand, the teacher interacts with the child and discusses the action itself, as well as its effects on the other children, the child comes to perceive his actions in relation to the social setting. If the child's action, in the teacher's opinion, warrants a consequence, it should be social in nature (i.e., isolation of the child from the group or removal of social freedom by not allowing the child to participate in the activity the next time). In this way, the child comes to develop an understanding of the continuity of the act itself and its social ramifications on him personally. Then, and only then does the child learn to "think twice" and become more responsible for his personal actions.

To many early childhood teachers, social discipline is common practice; however, this is not the case in dealing with older children within most educational settings, although it is known that self-discipline is qualitatively more beneficial and necessary as the child grows toward maturity.

We realize that there is the ever-present possibility that some disturbances demand physical interaction on the part of the teacher, (i.e., circumstances which involve the physical well-being of the child). In such instances the child must be protected. It is, therefore, encumbent upon the teacher to use whatever safe means are necessary to assure the safety of the child.

The well-being of the child is a concern which must be taken in its total perspective. Thus, educators must at all times consider the psychological consequences of all disciplinary actions taken. For

example, one ploy commonly used by teachers is that of the personal embarrassment of the child. To the uneducated, this technique seems to be highly successful, for it often stops the child's negative actions, at least temporarily. However, this approach often results in anxieties that hinder true learning and many times creates tension in the child-teacher relationship. Furthermore, the goal of a social education is to develop children who are capable of controlling themselves, rather than being controlled by means of consequential debasement.

As the school is primarily a social institution, education must be a social process. In effect, it must help the child to develop his or her powers for social ends. Individual and social values are not brought to fruition within a democratic society for forced indoctrination. Values truly mature as an individual enters into the proper relationship with others in a unity of sharing work, play, and thought. Only then does the individual begin to think in terms of self and society. Therefore, the teacher's job is not to impose a rigid set of little-understood rules, ideas, and values, but rather to develop an environment of selected influences which shall affect the child and assist social development toward a self-discipline mode.

INDEPENDENCE AND STRUCTURE

Educators cannot assume that the child is innately capable of total independence and has the power of mature reason, as many romantics have claimed. The teacher must perceive these as developmental goals. The child is born neither good nor evil. He is born with the capacity to interact with the environment and learn through experience. The foundation laid during the child's early years must help him to realize

the limits of his own powers, as well as that of the social setting. Hence, the first step is instilling a sense of right and wrong.

If "right" were being quiet, immobile, and submissive, the "wrong" were being active in speech and movement and inquisitive in nature, as some believe, how simple the matter would be. However, as educators our objective is to free the child for purposeful activity, work, and self-criticism and from both internal impulses which destroy his perseverance and external fetters which stifle his creativity and curiosity.

Obviously, the child is born helpless. So, too, is the individual born again to the social process of the school setting in a limited way. Hence, the teacher must help the child to overcome, through the development of the power of reason, the barriers which inhibit his activity. Children cannot be molded as a statue, but must mold themselves, and this is accomplished through the guidance of the teacher and the child's interaction with other children. A social being emerges; therefore, to limit the child entirely because of his moral level kills his natural desires to learn. To serve the child in everything that is done is to render him to insecurity through dependence. The desired outcome of the development of the freedom to think and do is not accomplished by mere command or observation, but through the child's own experience. Thus we must envision an environment which not only allows the child to utilize his natural impulses, but also one which guides him in their use.

For example, the child enters school with the natural impulse to communicate, to talk, to express himself in a way which since birth has been encouraged by his home environment. School must not truncate this

impulse and ignore the experience the child has had at home; nor can the child in the school's collective social setting continue to speak whenever he desires. It is the teacher's occupation to expand through the environment the child's experience to fit the new social situation. Thus the teacher should never say to the child, "shut up" or physically contain his speech by use of force. The teacher should work with the child to help him understand when it is appropriate to talk and when it is not. As this is education and the child is learning, it takes patience and perseverance on the part of the teacher. Many times the teacher may have to use a form of social discipline to accomplish this aim. This, however, is what total social education is all about. As the child comes with a natural impulse to be active, we must not stop his activity, but modify the environment to accomodate to this impulse and to help the child to understand and control this impulse in a social setting. As the child is naturally curious, we must not only develop an environment to utilize this impulse, but must also help him to control it, to develop perseverance. Thus we learn by watching children. Above all, the teacher must realize that although children exhibit common impulses, they are individuals and require a personal education. Step by step, day by day, as the child lives within an environment, the teacher's natural impulses will become more obvious to him or herself, thus allowing for personal control, freedom, and independence. Hence, we see that structure and intervention are quite necessary elements for social development but that they should not be oppressive. They should not suffocate what the child is naturally, they should only help to modify it. The foundation of structure and intervention is what eventually leads the child to freedom and

independence. Without it, a total education is impossible, for the child develops without the self-control that is essential for true learning to take place.

In summary, there are dualistic concerns in regard to discipline when social education is discussed. On the one hand, rigidity through forced control upon natural impulses results in a severe restriction of intellectual development and overall growth. The pigeon-holing of children into a regimented process of indoctrination of instruction and into the unnatural, stiff atmosphere of the traditional school builds only a facade of what the process and product of a true education must be. On the other hand, freedom is not to be strictly identified with activity and egocentric pleasure on the part of the child. Freedom must be perceived and developed as a means to accomplish hard work, perseverance, and self-criticism, as well as pleasure, but not as an end in itself. Freedom is merely an illusion as long as it is based upon uncontrolled impulse and desire. Freedom is real only so far as it is built upon the capacity to think and it is this kind of responsible freedom which the educator must develop and encourage when one considers that internalized self-discipline ought to be a primary, essential goal for all people in educational institutions for children.

In order for teachers to enact successfully the process of a social discipline they must be familiar with the Trinity of Discipline, "Structure-Intervention-Consistence" (Walsh, Cowles 1980).

Very simply, structure is the particular environment the teacher establishes for his/her students; Intervention are the various means a teacher uses to interact within the established structure; Consistency is that element of the Trinity of Discipline that the teacher provides

to the structure through his/her interaction with the students as the environment evolves.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, it is our belief that the act of disciplining a child or a generation of children cannot be based upon merely "putting a stop" to negative actions via means of reactionary techniques of control. We believe that if educators begin to consider discipline as a major aspect of the educational aim of socialization of the child, significant contributions toward his/her moral, social development will take place.

It is our contention that socialization must be a major element in a total education for students. Discipline within this social education must be based upon the Trinity of Discipline and be preventive as well as corrective. It must guide the children in the development of a social consciousness and not merely be seen as a means of repentant melancholy. Discipline must be a process constructed and enacted in harmony with moral educational theory, whereby the child experiences social consequences consistent with the next-higher moral stage in his development. Discipline as an aspect of the social life of the school must contribute to the cognitive moral development of the child, and not merely restrict or shape him, for social consciousness is a product conceived in thought and interaction rather than blind obedience. To quote Kohlberg (1975) once again:

> There is very little new in this - or in anything else we are doing. Dewey wanted democratic experimental schools for moral and intellectual development 70 years ago. Perhaps Dewey's time has come (p. 677).

REFERENCES

Archambault, R. (Ed.). John Dewey On Education: Selected Writings. New York: Random House, 1964.

Bandura, A., and McDonald, F. "The influence of social reinforcement and the Behavior of models in shaping children's moral judgements." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1963, 67, 274-281.

Brodinsky, Ben. "Back to basics: the movement and its meaning." Phi Delta Kappan, March 1977, 522-527.

Dewey, J. The School and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1899.

Dewey, J. Moral Principles in Education. New York: Greenwood, Press, 1959.

Glasser, W. "A new look at discipline." Learning. December 1974, 5-11.

Kohl, H. 36 Children. New York: New American Library, 1967.

Kohlberg, L. "From is to ought: how to commit the naturalistic fallacy and get away with it in the study of moral development." In T. Mischell (Ed.), Cognitive Development and Epistemology. New York: Academic Press, 1971, 151-233.

Kohlberg, L. "The cognitive-developmental approach to moral education." Phi Delta Kappan, 1975, 56, 670-677.

Kozol, J. Death at an Early Age. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967.

Loevinger, J., and W. Essler, R. Measuring Ego Development. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970.

Mead, G. H. On social psychology; selected papers. Anselm Strauss (Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956.

Phi Delta Kappan (Entire Issue), March 1977.

Piaget, J. The moral judgement of the child. New York: Free Press, 1948.

Silberman, C. Crisis in the Classroom: The Remaking of American Education. New York: Random House, 1970.

Walsh, K. and Cowles, M. Taming the Young Savage. Huntsville: Strode Press, 1984.

Walsh, K. and Cowles, M. "Social Consciousness and Discipline in the Urban Elementary School." The Urban Review. Spring 1979; Volume 11, Number 1. 25-37.

Walsh, K. and Cowles, M. Developmental Discipline. Birmingham Religious Education Press, 1982.